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BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES No. 3.

Jan. 22, 1841. March 18, 1874.

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BY

MRS. SOPHIA BRONSON TITTERINGTON.

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To live in memory here, in heaven by love and praise."

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JAMES GUILBERT, PRINTER.

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The Assam valley might in all justice be called the "Paradise of India." The plains of Bengal are flat and arid, while this beautiful valley through which flows the Brahmaputra river, is clothed with perpetual verdure.

The province of Assam lies south-east of the Himalaya range. The course of the river, after breaking through its lofty mountain barrier, determines the direction of the valley. Ranges of hills bound this plain, running parallel with the river, forming the boundaries on the north-west and south-east. These hills are inhabited by many warlike tribes, as the Garos, Mikirs, Nagas and others, all of which present a grand field for missionary labor. The approach to Assam is thus well described: "It is reached from Calcutta, the nearest sea-port by ascending the Ganges a short distance, and its tributary the Brahmaputra. Nearing Assam, distant hills are to be seen. They become more frequent and closely grouped, till, as you enter the valley, you pass through a gateway of rocky, high hills, beautifully covered with tropic verdure, wild and romantic in the extreme, and continuing like bulwarks each side of the deep and rapid stream."

Going up the river past native villages and English stations, we come at last to Jaipur, which is situated in the Northern

part of the province, almost beneath the shadow of the Himalaya. Here, at this wild lonely station, Jan. 22nd, 1841, was born Maria Bronson, second daughter of Miles and Ruth Montague Bronson. Soon after her birth the family removed to Nowgong, a station in central Assam, situated on the Kullung river, a branch of the Brahmaputra.

Around the old Nowgong home the sweetest associations linger. One by one, little children came to brighten the exile of the parents, till six daughters filled the mission bungalow with music and sunshine.

For seven years Maria remained with her parents in India. Very few traces are left of those early years. Her older sister remembers the missionary spirit she shewed even then. Old native women, still living in Nowgong often speak of "Maria Baba," and the sympathy she manifested for the degraded heathen around her. Often she asked permission to give her own little dresses to clothe the poor, naked children, whom she used to gather about her, and teach of the one true God, and have them learn the Catechism, and recite it to her. Soon came to these parents the duty which constitutes the great trial of Missionary service. More than the exile from home and native land, is the stern necessity of sending away from them their darling children. Oh, the agony of the mother's heart. But the children cannot be reared in that climate, in either physical or moral health, so the sacrifice must be made, though the hearts of the parents are nigh to breaking!

In the year 1849 when Maria was eight years old, the father and mother took five of the little band of daughters and brought them to their native land. The youngest, a lovely

child of eighteen months, was of too tender an age to be exposed to the hardships and privations of the long sea voyage, so she was left behind in the loving care of dear missionary associates. The good shepherd took the little lamb to his own fold during the parents' absence.

The voyage homeward was a formidable undertaking with five restless little children, the oldest only ten years of age. It was long and tedious, and Mr. and Mrs. Bronson went on shore at Boston, with their charge, thankful that they had been permitted to cross the ocean in safety. Once in America, the burden of the parents hearts was "what shall be done with the children?" They committed this, with all their other anxieties, to their Father in heaven. Pleasant Christian homes opened their doors for each of the little ones, with one exception. The right place not offering itself for their fourth daughter Hattie, they took her back to India with them. Maria and her sister Lizzie were privileged to find a home together. A Christian lady, to whom had been denied the gift of children of her own, lavished upon them the love and devotion of her generous heart. The name of Mrs. Davis Cotes, of Springfield, N. Y. will ever be held in loving grateful remembrance by many for the service she did for Christ and the cause of missions. At this time she was principal of the flourishing school, known as "Locust Hill Female Seminary" in Springfield. The free advantages of this school were open to Maria and her sister. After a time it was closed on account of Mr. Cotes' failing health, but the education of the sisters went on without interruption. Mrs. Cotes was possessed of ample means which were freely expended for the benefit of her adopted daughters. Governesses were provided

at home, and at one time they attended for a few terms the "Cherry Valley Female Seminary" an institution ten miles from Springfield. Maria's journal kept through these years containing a faithful record of her life, and sent monthly to her parents in India, gives us glimpses of an energetic, positive character, and of a strength of will which often gave cause for repentence, but, which under the wise control of her foster-mother, added to the race efficiency of later years.*

When sufficiently advanced to pass the examinations at Mt. Holyoke Seminary, Maria and her sister went there hoping to take the entire course. They were ambitious, and like too many others, the system prevailing there was too much for their strength and endurance. Maria's school days ended with a long and dangerous illness, during which her friends despaired of her life, while her sister, whose history during these years seems so closely entwined with hers, as hardly to be separated from it, struggled along with failing strength, until she too left school to be a life-long invalid. Anxious to com-

*Soon after finding a home at Springfield, Maria and Lizzie were converted and united with the Presbyterian Church, of which their foster-parents were members. From the first, Maria's religious life seemed to be of an active rather than a meditative type. As one has aptly said in reference to her, she shewed her "faith by her works." Her journal shows her to have been conscientious and highly appreciative of the loving care and training bestowed upon her.

A few words will explain a matter which has puzzled many. Maria's name, especially in her private correspondence often appears as Maria Bronson Cotes, and it is so given upon her tomb-stone. The facts in the case are these:—Mrs. Cotes adopted the girls legally, thus giving them a right to her name, that in the case of her sudden death, they should not be left unprovided for. Their own name was by no means given up, but the name of Cotes was added. When Maria accompanied her father back to India, under appointment from the Missionary Union, she was known under the name of Bronson, as was natural under the circumstances. Yet, as has been said, her love and gratitude to her foster-mother led her to retain her name as far as possible, and so we frequently find the full signature in letters to family and personal friends.

In 1855, Mrs. Bronson returned to America, bringing her daughter Harriette, and Mrs. Cotes had taken this child also into her heart and home, so that three of the sisters were sheltered in one Christian household. The children were permitted to greet both parents a few years later, when failing health drove them from the field at the time of the Sepoy rebellion, and pleasant gatherings were held at their temporary home at Hamilton, N. Y.

plete the course she did not complain until the mischief was beyond repair. Her dear foster-mother spared no means necessary to restore the lost health, while Maria to whom the care of the sick seemed a special gift watched over her suffering sister with the tenderest care.

Maria's intellectual endowments were above the medium, still her bent was practical rather than purely intellectual and scholarly. She belonged to the New-England type of efficient, clear-headed women, whose energy and executive ability must find a tangible outlet. This very trait made her the missionary that she was. She was quick to plan, equally ready to execute.

About the year 1863, Maria went to Lawrence, Mass., to visit the family of her eldest sister. While here her lungs having been troublesome with tendency to cough, she entered the school of "Physical Culture," in Boston, under the charge of Dr. Dio Lewis, and took a course of his "Light Gymnastics." This proved of great benefit to her physically, and after graduating in one of the normal classes, she and her youngest sister, who had previously taken the same course, went to Auburn, N. Y., to teach gymnastic classes. They met with good success during their stay, and Maria, as usual, made many warm friends. She had a singularly winning manner, which never failed to attract those around her, and usually a friendship once made was life-long.

Soon after this time, the shadow of a great sorrow fell upon her life, and her health, both physical and mental, suffered in consequence. Her friends watched her with solicitude, fearing that the old energy and strength would never return. Everything that love could procure was lavished upon her, and at

last Maria began to rally. Her return to health was not rapid, but it was sure, and once more she was her old self, except that the busy brain planned more eagerly and the hands were more restless in their activity.

In 1868 the glad news came that the beloved parents were again on their way home. This was to be the last home coming for the precious mother, for she soon entered the heavenly home. Dr. Bronson's health was in a very precarious condition, and his life depended on an immediate change of climate. During the trip from Calcutta to London he improved rapidly, and Mrs. Bronson's health was unusually good. But sad times awaited them. One morning on the voyage, Mrs. Bronson was violently thrown from a couch in the upper cabin, which fall broke the hip-bone, and inflicted other injuries. The poor sufferer was carried to her berth and the rest of the journey was passed in agony. The lurching of the steamer would undo all the work of bandaging and placing the limb, so that no relief could be obtained before reaching New York. Once there, the best medical aid was procured, so that in a few weeks she was able to be taken to Springfield, N. Y., to her anxiously waiting children.

The mother's heart, for so many years repressed in its longings, cried out to have her children all about her once more. So it was arranged that all should meet at Chicago, at the home of Mrs. Tolman, the eldest sister, and spend the winter together.

This plan was carried out, but the joy of being together was tempered with dark shadows of coming sorrow. The beloved mother was slowly, but surely fading away. The shock to her system from the accident on the homeward

journey was too great, and a terrible wasting disease took possession of her frame. It was pitiful to see her look around upon her daughters, whom she had given up when little children, now grown to womanhood without her loving watch-care, and to hear her say, "My life has been one long hunger for my children. God helped me, else I should have died long ago!"

There was almost more sorrow than joy mingled with that winter's reunion. The dear invalid sister was stricken down with brain-fever, went down to the river's very edge, and even dipped her foot in its cold waters; then came, oh, so slowly, back to life and consciousness again. Then the mother's constant suffering, as the clay tenement wasted away, was agony to the watching ones who loved her.

During the fall and early winter, Maria and her youngest sister taught a select school in the south part of the city, also a private class in gymnastics. Her energy and perseverance were strongly displayed in this enterprise, overcoming obstacles that to many would have been insuperable. Her mother's health failed so rapidly, that after a while, all outside work was necessarily given up, that she might take her place by the bedside as nurse and chief caretaker to the dear one, a task for which she was peculiarly fitted.

It was during this winter, before the hope of her mother's ultimate recovery was given up, that she decided to return to India with them, and take up mission work as the work of her life. With the delusion of disease, Mrs. Bronson thought she would be able to return to Assam the next fall; and talked much of the happiness it would be to have Maria with them. She clung to this hope to the very last, and no one had the heart to tell her it could never be.

While in Chicago, Maria and her sister Hattie, were baptized by their father into the fellowship of the First Baptist Church of that city. It will be remembered that Mrs. Cotes being a member of the Presbyterian church, her adopted daughters had joined that organization. Maria retained her membership with the first church until her death, and always regarded it with the deepest affection.

In the spring of 1869, there was a breaking up of the family circle, united after so many, many years of separation. The youngest daughter, Sophie, was married, going to her new home in the west, after which, Dr. Bronson, accompanied by Maria, took his wife to her early home in Central New York, the other girls went back to the dear Springfield home, leaving Mrs. Tolman once more alone with her own family. Mrs. Bronson's health still failing rapidly. She was taken to the Water Cure at Elmira, N. Y., with Maria still her faithful, devoted nurse and care taker. Everything that love and medical skill could suggest, was done, but the lamp of life flickered for a while in its socket, then went out forever. To the last her heart was with the dear mission. Among her parting words to her husband were these: "Hasten back to our loved work. I will be thy guardian angel, and await thee at the pearly gate." Maria's tender ministrations were an inexpressible comfort to her, so long deprived of the companionship of her children. The pet name "Mitie," used in the long ago childhood, was oftenest on her lips.

An extract from Maria's journal, written at this time, will show the depth of love and devotion in her heart, for her sainted mother. The date is Sept. 30th, 1869.

"About seven o'clock this evening, darling mamma passed away to the spirit land. O, what months of suffering have been hers'. Since

May I have been with her almost constantly. She sighed for rest. God has given it to her, the "Rest that remaineth for the people of God!" When I found she would never speak to me again, I never could do anything more for her, my heart was almost broken. Dear Saviour, comfort dear papa! Dear, sainted mamma!"

The precious remains of the dear mother were taken to her native village of Madison, N. Y., for burial. The emaciated, suffering look passed away from her face, after the death angel had set his seal upon it. The lost youth and beauty came back, and an expression of such perfect peace, that all who looked upon her in the flower-laden casket, felt that God had indeed given "to His beloved, sleep!"

After the funeral, Maria's heart and hands were full with the preparations for an early departure of herself and father for India. Two were to go in a lonely path when there were to have been three, but one had been called by the Master to exchange the earthly toil for the heavenly crown. Maria felt that she had an especial work to do, in being the companion and support of her bereaved father, and nobly did she fulfill her mission. A month after Mrs. Bronson's funeral, Dr. Bronson and Maria went to St. Louis to attend the anniversaries. Before this time all missionaries had been sent to India by the old route on sailing vessels. It was proposed at this meeting that funds be raised to send these two by the overland route, as being more comfortable and expeditious.

We find the following record in Maria's journal:

"The pleasant thing of all was Mr. Jacob's interest in our going overland to India. Through him nearly the extra amount needed was raised. Our Father does care for us, and we are saved the long way by the cape, and shall reach Assam three months earlier."

From St. Louis Maria returned to Chicago for the final leave taking from dear friends there. On the evening of

Nov. 23,after a precious, never-to-be-forgotten farewell service, our travellers turned their faces toward New York. In a letter written the evening before taking ship, to her brother-in-law, she writes:

"To-morrow noon we are to be on board the Nevada, which will bear us away from all we hold dear. But it is a comfort to know that it will not take us away from our precious Saviour. He has seemed doubly near these last days of trial. O, it is sweet to live for Jesus! I am glad I can serve Him, and not this wicked world. Pray earnestly for your absent sister, that she may ever be faithful. Our meeting hereafter will be made all the more precious by the long separation. God bless my dear brother! Good bye."

They sailed from New York, in the steamship "Nevada," Capt. Green, Dec. 15th, 1869. We can imagine how much was crowded into that last week, although she has kept no record of it. She was very seasick for some days, so that the first entry we find in her ship journal is dated Dec. 25th. She thus introduces us to her new life:

"We left New York at two o'clock, Dec. 15th, Mr. and Mrs. Cross, with dear papa and myself, compose our missionary circle. There are fifteen passengers with ourselves, most of them very delightful people. There are only five ladies. Fortunately, we are all very good friends. * * * Last eve, saw the light off Cape Clear, and to-day have seen the dim outline of the Irish coast."

She relates the events of the journey with a clear minuteness that makes the entire trip stand out with peculiar vividness. The party, after making a short stop in Liverpool, went to London, Dec. 27th, where they made a stay of several weeks, to make purchases for outfit, etc. Dr. Bronson had dear friends residing here, some of them old India acquaintances, and Maria found association with them very delightful. The party had some opportunities for sight-seeing in this great city, of which Maria gives graphic discription.

Jan. 1st, 1870. She writes:

"It seems almost sad to spend this first day of the New-Year in a strange land, so far away from those we love, but so it is. Our hearts are full of gratitude when we remember how we have been carried safely across the mighty deep. Yes, many things fill me with thankfulness, one especially, that one so sinful, so unworthy, should be permitted to carry the glad tidings of salvation to a benighted people. May this New-Year be the most devoted of my whole life to my Master's work! O, that many sheaves may be gathered—that a glorious harvest may be reaped for the kingdom of heaven. It is a privilege to be with dear papa. The old year took our precious mamma from us, but 'our loss is her eternal gain.'"

The missionary company left London Jan. 13th for Calais, experincing the usual discomforts in crossing the English Channel. The next day they went on to Paris. Here they found some old American friends, and enjoyed their week's stay in the brilliant French capital exceedingly. Jan. 14th, they were once more on their way, crossing France by rail to Marseilles. Jan. 22nd, was Maria's birthday, and we find this entry in her journal.

"My birthday! Just one year ago, our precious mamma was with us. Little did I thinkthen that dear papa and I would now be on our way to our Indian home without her. O, how I loved her, and how sadly I miss her, but God knows best. She has borne her cross and now is wearing a fadeless crown. May God help me to be His faithful follower that we may at last meet in heaven. I believe we shall know each other there! O, the influence such parents leave behind them!

'This has certainly been a most eventful birthday.

"We had rather a hard night, as we found nothing like the delightful accommodations of our American sleeping cars. Found it difficult to keep warm, notwithstanding our many wraps, and the hot tins at our feet, for it was a very frosty night, I was glad when morning dawned upon us, and we could enjoy the country. The numerous towns we passed looked very strange—such odd-looking houses and people! Apple-orchards were abundant, and most of the trees, as we neared Marseilles, were covered with foliage, reminding us we were fleeing from stern winter. I was glad to arrive at Marseilles, which was near noon. We took our baggage directly to our S. S. "Poonah," Capt. Hazelwood. We were delighted with our vessel. It is very large, and our staterooms are pleasant for a steamer. * * * * * *

"It was pleasant to be on board ship, and have no motion to tire one's head. Yes, I felt happy and thankful all the evening, happy, that my Heavenly Father was permitting me to go on a mission of love to the perishing heathen, and thankful, that we had thus far been brought safely on our way."

We now see our travellers embarked on the Mediterranian Sea, their faces turned toward the Orient, where lay the land of their desire. For two or three days they experienced very rough weather. Then, a smoother sea brought relief. Under date of Jan. 25th, Maria thus describes a pleasant episode of the journey:

"Very early this morning, we passed Stromboli. The Captain told us he saw smoke and fire issuing from it. I regretted missing the sight. Soon after breakfast, I was out on deck, enjoying the island of Sicily on one side, and Italy on the other. It was a glorious sight. We were near enough to see the houses, and orange trees, covered with luxuriant foliage. I enjoyed it all so much. We saw the base of Mt. Ætna, a mist nearly obscured the distant peaks. What was most beautiful of all, as we were passing through the Straits, a most perfect rainbow nearly arched the waters, lasting for some moments. O, this bow of promise! I believe it is always a comfort to God's believing ones. I felt it was a renewed assurance that He would be with us, and bring us safely to our journey's end."

Jan. 28th, she writes:

"About eight this morning, we arrived in Alexandria—not a very attractive looking place, so low and sandy. We had some difficulty with the Egyptians. Quite a quarrel ensued which boat should be taken by our party, till they all seized upon our baggage, and had to be brought to order by the officers of our ship. I now realize more than ever that we are fast leaving an enlightened country, and going farther and farther into lands whose people are sitting in darkness. Nothing, like such scenes as we witness here, can lead us to lift up hearts of gratitude that we have had the blessed Bible to be 'a lamp unto our feet, and a guide unto our path.'"

The entire record of their sight seeing in Alexandria, is exceedingly fascinating in its vividness of description. They visited "Pompey's Pillar," and many other Egyptian wonders.

But the true missionary spirit so filled her soul, that even the world renowned ruins that lay all around them, could not make her forget that God's noblest creation—human souls—were perishing in eternal ruin. She writes:

"As we rode through the native portion of the city, and saw the utter degradation of the people, especially the *women*, my heart ached for them, and I longed that the blessed gospel might find a hold in this dark land. * * * * * * I am quite bewildered when I think of all my eyes have seen to-day. I know I am thankful that my lot has not been cast here, though were it my work to labor among these people, I should earnestly strive to raise them from their low condition. But O, how unable should we be to do this work without the aid of our Heavenly Father!"

Jan. 31st, they left Alexandria, going by rail to Cairo. Maria seems to have enjoyed this glimpse of the country very much. She was enthusiastic at sight of the Nile, the famous river of Egypt. At Cairo they remained five days, which were all too short to see the wonders in that vicinity. They visited the Heliopolis, or Temple of the Sun, the beautiful and mysterious Pyramids, and other renowned places. Feb. 5th they went by rail to a point a few miles distant from Suez, where the S. S. Deccan was awaiting their arrival. Maria speaks of seeing the partially completed Suez canal in the distance, also the plain where the Israelites are supposed to have crossed the Red Sea. Feb. 6th they were fairly under way on the waters of the Red Sea, and the day following she commenced the study of the Assamese language. The weather grew oppressively warm very rapidly as they advanced into the tropics. At Aden she records a delightful moonlight trip into the city, and notices that the people are much more intelligent and interesting than in Egypt. Feb. 11th, they entered the Indian Ocean, and reached Ceylon on the 20th, where they went on

shore for change and rest. They spent two delightful days on the island meeting some pleasant Christian people, and enjoying the charming scenery. They reached Madras Feb. 25th, but the waves were running so high they did not go on shore. Maria began to realize that she was really in the midst of Paganism, and her heart's desire was to reach her journey's end and be really at her chosen work. As soon as the sea was sufficiently calm, to make the transit safely, Mr. and Mrs. Cross who had been their companions thus far on the long journey, left them for the Rangoon steamer, which would take them to their field of labor in Burmah. It was hard to part with these dear friends, but they were cheered with the thought that soon the weary voyage would be done, and the dear old home in Assam valley be reached. March 2nd, they reached the Sandheads, and took in the pilot whose duty it was to guide the ship through the treacherous Hoogly river to Calcutta. This is a dangerous and difficult piece of navigation, but a kind providence watched over our travellers, and brought them in safety to their destination. We will let Maria tell the story of her feelings on their arrival:

"About four p. m. we neared Calcutta. The pier was lined with those hoping to meet their friends. Every face was beaming with smiles. I thought if I could see the dear familiar faces from 'over the other side' waiting to welcome me, I should have a truly happy heart. Yet I can say, *I was happy*, for though the loved ones were far away, there was pleasure in the thought I had left them for my precious Saviour!"

They were not without warm greetings from friends, however. They were at once taken to the charming home of an old and dear acquaintance, where they enjoyed the most generous hospitality during their stay in the city.

March 14th, Dr. Bronson and Maria started on the last stage

of their long journey. They went by rail to Goalundo on the Brahmaputra, the mighty river which from its unknown source far beyond the Himalayas, bursts through the mountains, and rolls its resistless flood through the Assam valley to the sea. At Golando they took the steamer "Punjaub," Capt. Elder. Thirty years before, the missionaries for Assam made the journey in little native boats, rowing against the strong current, but the finger of progress has touched India after her sleep of centuries, and English enterprise has introduced many of the comforts and conveniences of modern civilization.

Our travellers had a very pleasant trip up the river. In her journal she mentions the following interesting incident:

"We anchored near a native village called Juggernaut Gunge. The jolly boat took us ashore. We followed a path that led through clumps of bamboos, mangoes and jack trees. Presently one of the villagers met us and invited us to a musical entertainment in honor of one of these gods, we soon had a large crowd about us, looking intently at the white lady. We found a strange looking image, to whom these deluded people were paying homage. The rude band commenced their discordant sounds, when two gaily dressed women began to dance. I was shocked at their lack of modesty. Two bright little boys with wonderful voices, sang at intervals. The place was lighted with torches. O how like a savage country it seemed as those horrid sounds greeted our ears, and we looked upon those crowds of half naked people. They treated us with great respect, and took much pains to provide us with seats."

She thus chronicles her entrance into Assam proper: "We are leaving the dreary plains, and coming right on to the grand hills. The scenery here is beautiful. We anchored at a most romantic place, high hills on one side and a plain on the other." Near Gowalpara, Dr. Bronson had the pleasure of meeting his life-long friend and missionary associate, Dr. Stoddard, in whose family the little Frances Jane was left, when the parents brought the other children to America, a

score of years before. Maria speaks of the joy of this reunion of the veteran laborers. Dr. Stoddard went on with them until they met the down steamer. At Gowhati, where they spent twenty-four hours, the native Christians were overjoyed at seeing their beloved teacher once more, and welcomed his daughter with tears mingled with smiles of joy, and seemed to transfer to her the affection they had felt for the mother, who could never return to them. At Koliabor they left the Punjaub and the Brahmaputra, and proceeded to Nowgong, which is situated thirty-two miles distant on the banks of the Kullung. The rest of the journey must be made on the backs of elephants. This was a new experience to Maria. She describes it in her journal as follows:

"At half-past three we started for Nowgong. I was surprised to find such a good road through the jungle. Were not a bridge wanted here and there we might take the journey in a carriage. I really enjoyed the ride on the back of our monster elephant. Then we had a nice fresh breeze and the motion was not at all hard. All that was needed was a little change to break the monotony. Most of the way was through jungle. We passed through the pleasantest part of our ride after dark, so I could not enjoy the scenery. At the half-way bridge we stopped a few moments, for rest and refreshments. Here we met a well-educated native, a Deist. Papa had a plain talk with him, and as he understood English, I could say a few words to him of the Saviour. Thus I have tried to begin my work for Jesus. May the seed spring up, and be the means of bringing this poor deluded one to the foot of the cross! The native Christians came to meet us, so our company formed quite a procession.

"It was nearly ten before we arrived at Nowgong. We received the warmest of welcomes from dear Mrs. Scott."

Thus the long journey began Dec. 15th, was ended March 28th, and Maria found herself in the old home from which she had gone out, a little child. There were the trees which her father had planted upon the birth of each daughter. Everywhere were memorials of the mother whose faithful work had for so many years been done in this spot. The native Christians

met them with emotions of joy and sorrow. Sorrow for the one that was not, and joy, that once more they were to have the instruction of their revered "Bronson salib," and that "Maria Baba" had come to take her mother's place. Many of the older ones remembered her. Among them, her old "Ayah," or nurse, who had cared for her in infancy, though infirm and feeble, came tottering in to see her child. She writes, under date of March 29th, 1870:

"My first Sabbath in my new field of labor. It has been a happy one with me, though a great contrast to the many pleasant ones which have been spent in dear America. At eight this morning, with the English residents, seventeen in all, we met in the chapel for worship. Papa preached a beautiful sermon, which I feel must do good. He alluded very touchingly at the close to his return, and the bereavments which we had sustained. At eleven a. m. he preached again in Assamese. Nearly one hundred present. I was glad to see such good attention. This p. m. the S. S. classes met at the Bungalow. I am to have a few who understand English. This eve we had a prayer-meeting with the native Christians. My thoughts have been much with the dear ones at home. I feel sure they have remembered us at the mercy-seat."

The above extract from her journal will give an idea of the Sabbath routine in the mission stations. In a letter dated May 20th, 1870, written to her sister in Chicago, she says:

"I began the second book in Assamese yesterday. I enjoy the study of the language. I can say a few sentences, and begin to understand a little that is said. O, how I long to talk! I can then accomplish so much more. The people seem delighted when they hear me using a new word."

It will be seen from this that Miss Bronson made rapid progress in acquiring the language. It has been remarked that the children of missionaries, who have spoken several tongues when small, show a wonderful facility in the mastery of languages, when older. As in this, and many other cases, they may have quite forgotten all the tongues spoken in childhood

except the English, but their talent as linguists makes itself evident in maturer life.

A few months later she writes to a friend: "I am happy and contented for I find much to do. The days are too short even in India to accomplish all the duties planned. It is nearly a year since we arrived here, and it seems the shortest year of my life." This sentence gives us the key note of her earnest enthusiastic missionary life. She literally gave *herself*, body and soul to her work, and while greatly interested in the general and zenana work her especial charge was the Nowgong girl's school. It was established by her mother, in 1844, and thus came to her as a legacy from the departed. She loved it as the apple of her eye, and its success must be attributed to her untiring, devoted labor. During the year 1871, Mrs. Scott left Nowgong to assist in the the work at Gowhati. Maria missed her and the three little ones sadly. It seemed as if a large share of the light and sunshine had gone out of the home. A few months later Mrs. F. A. Danforth formerly connected with the mission, arrived from America and soon after was united to Dr. Bronson in marriage.

In 1873, Miss Bronson's support was assumed by the "Woman's Baptist Missionary Society of the West," and henceforth she was one of its missionaries. But she was much worn with her three years of incessant labor, and now, that Mrs. Bronson was there to care for the girl's school, and the other departments which Maria had superintended, she took a little respite and visited Mrs. Scott at Gowhati. On her return, she wrote her sister Dec. 14, 1873:

"I am at dear old Nowgong once more, after an absence of a little more than four months. The last two months I was able to help Mrs. Scott some in her girl's school and zenana work, but my strength did

not allow me to do all that my heart prompted. I am deeply interested in the work that is being done at Gowhatti, and trust it is but the beginning of brighter days for that hardened place.

"I spent twelve pleasant days in the mission boat. The first Sabbath we were in a large Hindoo village, where the 'Gongbura' received me very kindly. I had with me th ee of our native Christians, one of whom is now ready to teach and to preach. We went to the head man's house, where we found the people from far and near, assembled for a feast. We spent some time talking and singing with them. I think I never felt happier in my life, than while trying to tell these poor ignorant ones the story of the cross. They listened with deep attention, and I prayed that some poor soul might feel the truth, and seek to know more of our blessed religion. In the evening the women gathered around my boat. I tried to gain their confidence, at first, by asking them about their children and their homes. When they saw I wished to be their friend, they answered my questions readily, and began to ply me with innumerable inquiries, which opened the way for me to speak of the things that lay nearest my heart. Poor creatures! So ignorant and so full of superstition! They say: 'Why should *women* learn to read? Why should they forsake the customs and religion of their fathers? Ram would save them from danger.'

"The alligators were numerous around the sand-bank where we were stopping. I asked if they ever carried off their people? 'O yes!' they replied; but we throw into the river an offering to the river deities, and we have no more fear. I found one of these offerings, and had my men draw it to shore. It was made of the plaintain tree and covered with flowers. Inside were two white pigeons, with feathers dyed red, living on the rice which nearly filled the tiny boat. I brought the little creatures home. I stopped at a place called Jah Ghaut the next Saturday. There were thriving villages on both sides of the river. I sent word to the people that I would visit them the next day. Old men came around my boat to ask after their old Sahib, (papa.) They gladly welcomed his daughter and seemed pleased that I was willing to go to their houses. But what was my disappointment to wake early Sabbath morning and find it raining hard. We had not expected rain at this season of the year, so the best cover was not water-proof and my bed and luggage were be coming wet, and not daring to risk my health, I made my way reluctantly homeward. The dear ones were at chapel. The first sound that greeted my ears, was the sweet hymn of praise sung by our native congregation. I rejoice to be once more with this band of disciples in our station. Home never looked pleasanter to-me."

She was much encouraged soon after her return by the visit of the Government Inspector of Schools, who seemed

greatly pleased with the way in which she conducted her Girl's school. He wrote a very flattering commendation in the "visitor's book," and what was better promised to secure a "grant-in-aid," as soon as practicable. It is pleasant to record that he was as good as his word, and the help thus received enabled her to carry out more fully her plans for the school. He also sent her a present of forty rupees, which assistance was most timely.

She thus pleads the cause of this cherished object of her affections in a letter written to her friends in Chicago:

"Can you not help us in some little way to make our new school-house attractive? We would like to have some pictures to help us teach the little ones. What I want most of all is a *whole serie's* of large colored *Bible pictures*, and also pictures illustrating *Pilgrims Progress*, and pictures of birds, beasts, and any others that we could use in object teaching. We should have all these hung on the walls. How nice it would be if friends could give us these things, with large-sized slates, and all sorts of stationary. I want the pictures very much. I will also beg for the sewing and fancy-work department, which interests our women and girls. You know what is found useful in a work like ours. Dont call me troublesome, will you? I am not begging for myself, but for the *cause I love.*"

Thus passed four happy years, full of labor for Christ and perishing souls. The work of those years cannot be better summed up than in the words of her sister, in the sketch written for the "Helping Hand" soon after her death:

"Her natural energy, her hopefulness, and her strong will, all served her in planning and carrying forward her work. She saw before her, not the lost, the wretchedly undone, but God's chosen ones, who were to become His open followers. She never saw giants in the way, but rather the 'angel of His presence' who has said, 'Lo, I am with you always.' Four years she went about from house to house, or taught in her school, and by the purity and beauty of her life, as well as by her direct teachings, won souls to Jesus, and raised many dull and listless ones to higher aims. She had the affectionate regard and the highest esteem of her pupils, and of the Zenana women. God seemed to give her the heart of every one with whom she came in contact."

But the shadow of coming change settled slowly upon the Nowgong home. Soon after her arrival, Mrs. Bronson's health began to show signs of failing, very gradually, but insidiously, did disease fasten itself upon her, until consumption ended the life story. But, with the usual deceitful character of the malady, the invalid herself was the last to see the hopelessness of her case. It was at last decided that she should go to Calcutta for medical advice and treatment. She begged earnestly that her husband should not leave his work to go with her, saying: "I came to India to help, not to hinder." Maria was about to go to Calcutta to make some necessary purchases, and attend to some pressing business. Mrs. Bronson insisted that she should go by rail from Goalundo as first proposed, to save her valuable time, while she herself would take the longer route by river all the way, hoping that the fresh breezes and quiet travel would restore the wasted energies. The family were reluctant to have her go any part of the way alone, but her distress at any change in their plans was so evident, that they at last acceded to her wishes; Dr. Bronson staying alone in the home at Nowgong, with the neighbors as missionary associates, and Maria going by rail from Goalundo to Calcutta.

She reached the city quite a little in advance of Mrs. Bronson, who, on her arrival, went directly to Miss Seelye's sanitarium. Maria was shocked at the change in her appearance, although Mrs. Bronson herself could not realize she was really worse. But she failed so rapidly that the physicians ordered her off at once for a sea voyage to Singapore, summoning Maria to accompany her. She had less than twenty-four hours to arrange for this unexpected change in her plans, but

with her usual energy and efficiency she was ready at the appointed hour.

During the first few days at sea, the invalid rallied considerably and became quite confident that she would return sufficiently restored to health, to take up her work once more. Maria's letters give the incidents of the voyage, the calls at Rangoon and Maulmain on their way out, where they had delightful meetings with missionary friends. The improvement in Mrs. Bronson's condition was transient, and her strength failed day by day. As they neared Rangoon on the return voyage it became evident that Mrs. Bronson could not live to reach Calcutta. With great difficulty she was conveyed on shore to the home of Dr. and Mrs. Stevens. Maria speaks with the deepest gratitude of the tender sympathy and care and help of the missionaries here. All that lay in the power of human love and kindness was done. Death came at last to the weary sufferer, and she passed away in perfect peace on Tuesday, Feb. 3rd, 1874.

The last sad offices for the dear departed having been performed, Maria prepared to take up the lonely homeward way. But she was mentally and physically exhausted, and this exhaustion prepared the way for the sad event which soon followed.

Dr. Bronson came down to Calcutta expecting to meet his wife and daughter on their return. He was confronted with the telegram telling of his wife's death and burial at Rangoon. The shock to him was terrible, as may be imagined. He looked so feeble that Maria feared they must start for America at once. But under the sunshine of her presence, and tender ministrations, he rallied again. Although so worn by the ex-

periences through which she had been passing she gave herself little time for rest. She was impatient to return to her beloved school, and her mind was filled with plans for its improved management. When they were ready to return Dr. Bronson insisted that they go all the way by the river to give Maria some opportunity for the rest and recuperation she so evidently needed. She seemed to enjoy the trip very much, and to gain vigor daily.

We have before us the last letter (so far as known) written by her pen. It is full of sad interest on that account and also because it shews the eager anticipations never to be realized. We give a portion, dated March 8th, 1874:

"The last days in Calcutta were such busy ones I could not write letters. We came on board the "Raj Mahal" just one week ago. Instead of taking the rail to Goalundo we have came all the way from Calcutta by steamer. We shall have gone through some thirty-four rivers before we get into the great Brahmaputra. It is only yesterday that we left the 'Sunderbunds' beautiful forests or tree jungles where there are no human beings; nothing but wild beasts. We shall probably leave the steamer at Koliabor about the 20th, and there have two days journey, through the country to our old home."

The "old home," alas! was never to receive the light of her presence. The busy earnest life closed suddenly, and Maria Bronson was not for God took her. The story of her brief illness and unexpected death can best be told in the words of her stricken father:

"The rest and quiet seemed to do Maria much good. On the morning of the 18th of March she complained of slight nausea. At breakfast time she had fallen asleep, and I did not waken her. About noon she grew worse. I called a native doctor, who was very attentive, but medicine was of no avail. Soon terrible cramps set in; her eyes were sunken, her voice unnatural; and I knew by these unmistakable symptoms that our dear Maria had that fearful disease, cholera, in its worst form. The lady-passengers on board the "Raj Mahal" did all in their power to relieve her, but the disease went relentlessly on. 'Shall I recover?' was her

earnest inquiry of the native physician. He made no reply. Again she asked, 'Shall I recover?' I then said, 'My daughter you are very ill. We hope you may recover; but should it be God's will that you do not, has death any terror?' She whispered, 'No.'—'Is the Saviour with you?'—'Yes.'—'Have you any messages for your sisters, your foster-mother, or your school-girls?' She gave me an earnest, loving look, and said, 'I cannot talk.'

"We reached Gawalpara, landing about sundown. I sent immediately for Bro. Keith and the European surgeon. They had to travel eight miles, and did not reach us until nearly midnight, too late. In about half an hour after their arrival, she sweetly slept in Jesus. As I stood by the lifeless form of my dear child, in that lonely cabin, Jesus' sweet words came with power to my mind, 'What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' I felt to give up my dear child, my only companion and comfort in my desolate home in this dark land, and I wish to tell you, to the praise and honor of His name, that under this double bereavment I have been sustained and comforted."

Owing to the extreme heat, and the nature of the disease, it was imperative that the burial take place as soon as possible. Besides, the steamer could not long delay; so in the night hours a coffin was hastily constructed, and in the early morning the last remains of Maria Bronson were taken on shore, the officers and passengers following in the procession to the foot of the hill upon which Gowalpara is situated. Then they turned back, leaving the stricken father, accompanied only by the station physician, to go on his desolate way with his dead. Six wild Garo hillmen served as bearers. A grave had been dug in the beautiful cemetery overlooking the Brahmaputra. Bro. Keith was not there, so the bereaved, agonized father offered the last prayer over the coffin of his idolized child, committing "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," with no near and dear earthly friend at hand to comfort and console him. Only Jesus, in invisible presence, stood by the solitary mourner that morning on Gowalpara hill, breathing His own loving consolation into the striken heart. When the news of her death

was received it fell as a terrible blow upon Assam. Especially at Nowgong they were looking forward to her return in a very few days, and their great joy was by this providence turned into bitter mourning. Mrs. Neighbor writes:

"The news came like a thunder-clap to us yesterday morning. The light seemed to go out of everything, for we loved Miss Bronson as a dear sister. Every one here feels her death very sorely. When my husband spoke of it after service yesterday, there were few dry eyes, the women sobbing aloud. When I met her school-girls in my Sabbath school class in the afternoon, they were all in tears, and during the conversation cried as if their hearts would break. This morning they said they never wanted to go to school again, since the teacher had gone from them.

"Our dear sister had a kind, winning way with children, and she had won all hearts. She was devoted to her school, esteeming it a pleasure to have her girls with her, while they, on their part, were longing for her return."

Can we picture to our minds the desolation of the station, the loneliness of the home whence two had gone out, expecting to return, but whose footsteps would never more cross the threshold; the school without a teacher; the Bible-readers left without their leader?

At home the news brought a terrible shock, not only to the foster-mother, the sisters and other relatives, but to all connected with the "Society of the West." It was the first break made in the ranks of the workers on the field by death, and many tears fell at the thought of that new made grave in far off Assam. Even in dying she served the cause she so loved; for other earnest young souls were led by it to consecrate themselves to the work of missions.

A beautiful poem, suggested by the death of the two, so near together in point of time, but whose mortal remains rest in such widely different places, was written for the Helping Hand by Miss E. W. Brown, daughter of our venerable mis-

sionary Rev. Nathan Brown, D.D. We give the poem entire.

SCATTERED GRAVES.

The sacred river's silvery mist
Is by the morning sunshine kissed;
But dark the rushing wave below,
As one is borne against its flow,
Who wist not yester-morn 'twould be
Her day-break of eternity.

Closed are those eyes of liquid light,
In starless, unawakening night.
Not e'en a father's anguish now
Can call back life to lips or brow;
Nor the high work her spirit chose
Awake her from this long repose.

Her work is done. On distant shore,
Dear dying eyes seek hers no more;
From home, from kindred far, she kept
Love's vigil, till her sufferer slept;
In its last clasp the cold hand pressed,
Then laid the sainted to her rest.

Her own, how near! Death's shadowy wing
O'er watched and watcher hovering;
While in that soft and hallowed light
Her soul grew ready for its flight,
Stayed but to cheer the mourner's heart,
Then heard the summons, "Child, depart."

Now to its grave that dust so dear
Is borne by savage mountaineer;
With troubled voice the man of God
Commits her to her native sod,
Then, doubly stricken, bows his head,
Alone with sorrow and his dead.

Nay, not alone! God's angels keep
His watch o'er those who wake and sleep;
E'en death, through his providing care,
Will plant the seed whose fruitage fair
Of ransomed souls in years to come
Shall swell the reapers' "Harvest home."

Yet, land bereaved, beloved! for thee
Thy children's tears fall silently.
The sickle dropped, the grain unbound
Stands whitening all the fertile ground,
While scattered laborers, strong in faith,
Toil on, through suffering, unto death.

Oh, shall the anguish and the tears,
The martyr-lives of other years,
Whose agony of soul was given
To lift thy souls from hell to heaven,
Bring forth their future fruit in naught
But tender memory, reverent thought?

No! The dear ashes scattered wide
By Orient and by western tide,
Cry, "Speed the torch from hand to hand,
Till hut and fane illumined stand;
Till warrior, priest and devotee
In one glad worship bend the knee."

And let the sound of Sabbath bell
Over thy mountain barriers swell,
Till eastward meet and westward wave,
And in far isle and desert cave
That faith be held, that praise be sung,
Which know no bounds of clime or tongue.

A monument has been erected over Maria's grave, bearing the following inscription:

MARIA BRONSON COTES,
Beloved daughter of
REV. MILES BRONSON, D.D.,
Missionary of the
AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARY UNION.
She died of Cholera at Gowalpara
On her way from Calcutta to Nowgong, March 18th, 1874.
Aged 33 years, 1 month, and 26 days.
This monument is erected by her bereaved Father and
affectionate Foster-Mother, who, with a large
circle of relatives and friends, deeply
mourn her loss.
"Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of His saints."
Ps. 116: 15.

The grave, with its crowning monument, can be seen from all the steamers ascending or descending the Brahmaputra. Thank God! Maria Bronson sleeps in a Christian cemetery, where her tomb will be guarded and kept in safety. She might have died in the wild and lonely "Sunderbunds," through which they had just passed, where her grave would be at the mercy of wild beasts. But God cares for His own, and though she sleeps far away from home, and kindred, yet her dust will be held as a precious legacy by the native Christians of Assam.

Sleep, sweet sister! After life's fitful fever, sleep well! A sainted mother watched for thy coming, Now, in the fields of Paradise, watch for our coming feet! Till then we say, "Hail! and Farewell!"

"My God, I would not coldly offer Thee
The withered hue of feelings' flower,
The fragment of a passing hour,—
Gifts which have nothing cost to me.
But, looking down into my heart,
Whatever treasure it hath hidden deep,
Whatever talent it would strive to keep,
With these, to Thee, O God, I part.
I should not dare to bring affections blighted,
By the rude blasts of worldliness and pride,
Nor lay a worn-out heart the earth had slighted,
Upon the altar of the Crucified.
But in Life's dewy hours, when hope is on the wing,
My love, myself, my all, to Thee I bring."

(Taken from Miss Bronson's Commonplace Book.)

DATE DUE

SEP 19 '74			
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